

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 PRETORIA 3852

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, SF
SUBJECT: THE 1978 SESSION OF PARLIAMENT: DOMESTIC POLITICAL
 ASPECTS

REF: CAPE TOWN 202

1. SUMMARY: THE 1978 SOUTH AFRICAN PARLIAMENTARY SESSION WAS
BASICALLY A HOLDING OPERATION BY THE SAG. THE MOST IMPORTANT
LEGISLATION EXPECTED FROM THE SESSION, INCLUDING THE NEW
CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION AND LABOR REFORM, WAS NOT FORTH-
COMING. GOVERNMENT STRATEGY WAS TO MOVE AHEAD WITH ITS
SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT POLICY, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME ADOPTING
LIMITED REFORMS AND A MORE CONCILIATORY STYLE TO MAKE IT
MORE PALATABLE. ALTHOUGH NO MAJOR RESTRICTIVE LEGISLATION
WAS ADOPTED DURING THE SESSION, SEVERAL NEW LAWS WILL INCREASE
SECURITY, THREATEN FUND-RAISING ORGANIZATIONS AND OVERSEAS
DEFENSE FUNDS, EXTEND DETENTION OF WITNESSES, AND SOLIDIFY
THE NATIONAL PARTY'S ELECTOR POSITION. THERE WERE ALSO A
FEW LIBERAL MEASURES SUCH AS APPOINTMENT OF JURISTS TO
VISIT DETAINEES. THE SESSION WAS CHARACTERIZED BY
SHARP CLASHES BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE SMALL PROGRESSIVE
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FEDERAL PARTY OPPOSITION. ATTENTION, HOWEVER, WAS FOCUSED ON THE
INFORMATION DEPARTMENT SCANDAL AND ON THE GROWING SUCCESSION
STRUGGLE WITHIN THE NATIONAL PARTY.

HOLDING OPERATION

2. THE 1978 SOUTH AFRICAN SESSION OF PARLIAMENT,

WHICH ADJOURNED ON JUNE 16, WAS NOTABLE PRINCIPALLY FOR WHAT IT DID NOT ACCOMPLISH. THE SESSION WAS RELATIVELY UNEXCITING AS THE GOVERNMENT PROVIDED LITTLE INTO WHICH THE OPPOSITION COULD GET ITS TEETH, EITHER IN TERMS OF REPRESSIVE MEASURES OR REFORMS.

3. LEGISLATION TO IMPLEMENT THE NATIONAL PARTY'S (NP) NEW CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS, WHICH LESS THAN A YEAR AGO WAS EXPECTED TO BE THE HIGHLIGHT OF THE SESSION, WAS NOT INTRODUCED AS THE SAG APPARENTLY DECIDED TO TRY TO EXPAND CURRENTLY LIMITED COLORED AND INDIAN SUPPORT FOR ITS PLAN. TWO MEASURES WHICH WERE PASSED PROVIDE FOR THE ELECTION OF THE INDIAN COUNCIL (DURBAN 326), AND THE EXTENSION OF THE LIFE OF THE WHITE SENATE TO ALLOW IT TO PASS LEGISLATION ON THE NEW CONSTITUTION PRIOR TO ITS PERMANENT DISBANDMENT. A THIRD BILL LOWERED THE COLORED VOTING AGE TO 18. ALL THREE BILLS ARE INTERPRETED AS SMALL STEPS TOWARD THE NEW CONSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE. OPPOSITION LEADER COLIN EGLIN PRIVATELY PREDICTS THAT THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO IMPLEMENT THE NEW CHARTER PIECEMEAL; FOR EXAMPLE, BY RAISING THE TITLE OF THE CURRENT INDIAN AND COLORED REPRESENTATIVE COUNCILS TO THAT OF PARLIAMENT.

4. THE MOST SIGNIFICANT FORWARD STEP THAT HAD BEEN EXPECTED TO OCCUR DURING THE SESSION, LABOR REFORM, ALSO FAILED TO MA-
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TERIALIZE. MINISTER OF LABOR, FANIE BOTHA, TOLD PARLIAMENT IN APRIL THAT THE WEIHAN COMMISSION IS NOT EXPECTED TO COMPLETE ITS WORK UNTIL OCTOBER, AND THAT LEGISLATION RESULTING FROM ITS WORK WILL BE INTRODUCED IN 1979.

5. MINISTER OF JUSTICE JIMMY KRUGER ALSO ANNOUNCED DURING THE SESSION THAT THE REPORT OF THE CILLIE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO THE 1976 RIOTS WOULD NOT BE TABLED AS HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN EXPECTED. THE OPPOSITION SHARPLY CRITICIZED KRUGER FOR THIS DECISION, ASSERTING THAT THE REPORT WILL BE OF ONLY HISTORICAL VALUE BY THE TIME IT IS RELEASED TO PARLIAMENT AND THE PUBLIC. THE TABLING OF THE CILLIE REPORT WAS EXPECTED TO BE FOLLOWED BY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PARLIAMENTARY INTERNAL SECURITY COMMISSION, PISCOM, AUTHORIZED BY 1976 LEGISLATION) WITH WIDE POWERS TO INVESTIGATE AND RECOMMEND ACTION AGAINST ANY PERSON OR ORGANIZATION THREATENING THE SECURITY OF THE STATE. R66,000 WAS APPROPRIATED FOR PISCOM'S OPERATION, BUT IN THE ABSENCE OF THE CILLIE REPORT, THE HIGHLY CONTROVERSIAL COMMISSION WAS NOT ACTUALLY INSTITUTED.

6. ANOTHER WIDELY FEARED MEASURE HELD IN ABEYANCE FROM LAST YEAR, THE NEWSPAPER BILL, WAS NOT RESURRECTED. VORSTER HAD SAID AT THE TIME THE BILL WAS SHELVED LAST YEAR THAT THE PRESS WOULD HAVE A ONE YEAR RESPITE IN WHICH TO PROVE ITSELF RESPONSIBLE. APPARENTLY THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THAT THE BANNING OF THE WORLD AND DONALD WOODS OF THE EAST LONDON DAILY DISPATCH HAS SUFFICIENTLY CHASTENED THE PRESS FOR THE TIME BEING. THE SAG ALSO VERY LIKELY WISHED TO AVOID FURTHER INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM ON THE ISSUE.

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GOVERNMENT STRATEGY

7. WHILE BASICALLY ENGAGED IN A HOLDING PATTERN ON MAJOR LEGISLATION, THE GOVERNMENT NEVERTHELESS PASSED A NUMBER OF MEASURES TO REINFORCE APARTHEID AND A FEW TO MAKE IT MORE PALATABLE. GOVERNMENT POLICY STATEMENTS UNDERSCORED THAT NO BASIC CHANGE IN SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT WAS PLANNED. THIS WAS MOST EVIDENT IN VORSTER'S MAJOR SPEECH TO THE HOUSE IN MID-APRIL (CAPE TOWN 803), AND CONNIE MULDER'S REMARK EARLY IN THE SESSION THAT NO BLACK WILL HAVE SOUTH AFRICAN CITIZENSHIP ONCE NATIONAL PARTY POLICY IS CARRIED THROUGH TO ITS FULL CONCLUSION (CAPE TOWN 230). IN A DEBATE ON THE MIXED MARRIAGES ACT, GOVERNMENT SPEAKERS ALSO REITERATED THE NP'S MOST VERKRAMPTE IMAGE, WITH NATIONALISTS WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY CALLED FOR THE ACT'S REPEAL SITTING BY SILENTLY (CAPE TOWN 277). THE BANTU LAWS AMENDMENT BILL PASSED THIS SESSION WILL DENY CHILDREN OF CITIZENS OF

INDEPENDENT HOMELANDS PERMANENT URBAN RESIDENCE AND ALSO
BROADENED THE DEFINITION OF "IDLE PERSONS" SUBJECT TO BE
RETURNED TO THEIR RESPECTIVE HOMELANDS (CAPE TOWN 0344).
THE FORMER PROVISION--AS WELL AS LABOR MINISTER FANIE BOTHA'S
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PRONOUNCEMENT ON THE INELIGIBILITY OF HOMELAND BLACKS
TO JOIN UNIONS--SEEM TO RUN COUNTER TO THE NATIONALIST
OBJECTIVE OF MAKING CITIZENSHIP OF INDEPENDENT HOMELANDS MORE
ATTRACTIVE FOR BLACKS THAN SOUTH AFRICAN CITIZENSHIP.
ACCORDING TO SOME NATIONALISTS, THIS PROVISION WAS
LEFT OVER FROM M.C. BOTHA'S ADMINISTRATION OF BANTU
AFFAIRS AND WILL BE CORRECTED IN THE FUTURE.
ANOTHER FEATURE OF THE BANTU LAWS AMENDMENT BILL WHICH
IS DESIGNED TO MAKE INDEPENDENCE MORE ATTRACTIVE
IS DESIGNED TO MAKE INDEPENDENCE MORE ATTRACTIVE
CALLS FOR THE GRADUAL REPLACEMENT OF PASSBOOKS WITH
HOMELAND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS. IT IS EXPECTED THAT PRO-
VISION OF THE LATTER WILL CARRY CERTAIN ADVANTAGES FOR
BLACK JOBSEEKERS AND PENALIZE BLACKS FROM NON-INDEPENDENT
HOMELANDS.

8. THE ULTIMATE STATUS OF THOSE HOMELANDS THAT DO NOT
CHOOSE INDEPENDENCE WAS BRIEFLY DISCUSSED DURING THE
SESSION. MULDER AT ONE POINT, SEEMING TO CONTRADICT THIS
ASSERTION THAT THERE WOULD EVENTUALLY BE NO BLACK
SOUTH AFRICAN CITIZENS, REITERATED GOVERNMENT POLICY
THAT NO HOMELAND WOULD BE FORCED TO ACCEPT INDEPENDENCE.
LATER HE SAID THIS WAS A PROBLEM THAT THE GOVERNMENT
WOULD LOOK INTO AND THAT OTHER DISPENSATIONS COULD
BE CONSIDERED.

9. ON THE POSITIVE SIDE, MULDER ADOPTED A FAR MORE
CONCILIATORY STYLE THAN HIS PREDECESSOR, M. C. BOTHA,
AND HE ANNOUNCED SEVERAL DECISIONS THAT IMPLIED AC-
CEPTANCE OF URBAN BLACK TOWNSHIPS AS PERMANENT
PHENOMENA IN SOUTH AFRICA. MULDER STATED EARLY IN
THE SESSION THAT HE HOPED TO INTRODUCE A FIVE-YEAR
PLAN FOR BLACK DEVELOPMENT TURNING SOWETO INTO THE
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"MOST BEAUTIFUL BLACK CITY IN AFRICA." THE PLAN WAS NOT
FORTHCOMING, BUT NATIONALISTS SAY IT WILL BE PRE-
SENTED LATER IN THE YEAR. MULDER ALSO ANNOUNCED DURING
THE SESSION THAT HE WAS GRANTING AUTHORITY OVER A
NUMBER OF LOCAL AFFAIRS TO THE NEWLY ESTABLISHED BLACK

TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY COUNCILS.

IN THE FIELD OF LEGISLATION, THE MOST IMPORTANT ADVANCE WAS THE BANTU (URBAN AREAS) AMENDMENT BILL, PROVIDING FOR 99 YEAR LEASES TO BE MADE AVAILABLE TO QUALIFIED URBAN BLACKS OUTSIDE WESTERN CAPE (PRETORIA 2860). ANOTHER BILL EXPUNGED THE OFFENDING TERM "BANTU" FROM THE SOUTH AFRICAN LEGAL VOCABULARY.

OTHER LEGISLATION

10. THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUED TO BROADEN ITS CONTROL IN MANY AREAS. OF PARTICULAR INTEREST WAS THE FUND RAISING BILL (CAPE TOWN 1070), WHICH GIVES THE GOVERNMENT POWER TO RESTRICT DEFENSE FUNDS FROM OVERSEAS, AND WHICH WILL ENABLE IT TO CLOSE DOWN ANY SOCIAL WELFARE ORGANIZATION OF WHICH IT DISAPPROVES. ANOTHER BILL PROVIDES THAT WITNESSES CAN BE HELD FOR LONGER THAN THE PREVIOUS MAXIMUM OF SIX MONTHS (CAPE TOWN A-33). IN THE ELECTORAL FIELD A NEW BILL, WHICH WILL FURTHER ENHANCE THE NP'S ELECTION PROSPECTS, CONTAINS PROVISIONS LIMITING CERTAIN KINDS OF CAMPAIGN SPENDING (CLEARLY AIMED AT THE RELATIVELY WEALTHY PFP), REQUIRING CANDIDATES TO PRODUCE NOMINATING PETITIONS OF 300 NAMES (AIMED AT THE SPLINTER RIGHT-WING NHP), AND PROHIBITING PUBLICATION OF PUBLIC OPINION POLLS DURING ELECTION CAMPAIGNS. SEVERAL NEW MEASURES WERE PASSED TO INCREASE SECRECY IN GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS AFFAIRS. AMONG THEM, AN EMENDMENT TO THE ATOMIC ENERGY ACT PRO-

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HIBITS DISCLOSURE OF CERTAIN NUCLEAR INFORMATION (JOHANNESBURG 1292), WHILE THE PROTECTION OF BUSINESS BILL (PRETORIA 3083) PLACES SEVERE RESTRICTIONS ON PROVIDING BUSINESS INFORMATION, INCLUDING INFORMATION ON LABOR CONDITIONS, TO FOREIGN SOURCES. THE SECRET SERVICES BILL, MEANWHILE, CREATES A NEW SECRET ACCOUNT WHICH CAN BE DRAWN ON BY ANY MINISTER, NOT ONLY AS IN THE PAST BY THOSE CONNECTED WITH FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENSE AND STATE SECURITY. THERE WERE, HOWEVER, SOME LIBERALIZING MEASURES INCLUDING A MILD IMPROVEMENT IN THE CENSORSHIP SYSTEM, A SOFTENING OF THE HARSH DRUG LAWS, AND THE APPOINTMENT OF JURISTS TO VISIT SECURITY DE-TAINEES.

OPPOSITION PERFORMANCE

11. THE PROGRESSIVE FEDERAL PARTY (PFP, IN ITS FIRST TERM AS OFFICIAL OPPOSITION, GOT OFF TO A NOTABLY WEAK START (CAPE TOWN 241), BUT GAINED CONFIDENCE AS THE SESSION PROGRESSED. THE PFP WAS HAMPERED THROUGHOUT THE SESSION BY ITS FAILURE TO ENUNCIATE A CLEAR AND UNAMBIGUOUS POLICY. ITS VIEWS WERE NEVERTHELESS SO FAR CONFIDENTIAL

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REMOVED FROM THOSE OF THE GOVERNMENT THAT THE SESSION WAS PARTICULARLY ACRIMONIOUS ONE. LEADING GOVERNMENT FIGURES, INCLUDING THE PRIME MINISTER, DEFENSE MINISTER, AND FOREIGN MINISTER ATTEMPTED IN SPEECHES ON THE FLOOR TO CAST THE PFP AS DISLOYAL, IRRESPONSIBLE, AND A DANGER TO SOUTH AFRICA. THE PFP DID SUCCEED IN KEEPING MAJOR ISSUES ALIVE AND IN THE PUBLIC EYE, BUT IT HAD A NEGLIGIBLE EFFECT ON THEIR OUTCOME.

12. THE FOCUS OF ATTENTION DURING THE SESSION WAS THE INFORMATION DEPARTMENT SCANDALS, AND THE PFP MADE THE BEST OF THE OPPORTUNITY. ACCORDING TO PFP LEADERS, THE PARTY WAS ABLE AT LEAST ON THIS SUBJECT TO APPEAR RELEVANT TO THE PUBLIC. POLITICALLY, THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THE SCANDAL WAS VORSTER'S FAILURE DECISIVELY TO DEFEND MULDER AND THE DECISION TO REORGANIZE THE DEPARTMENT AND EVENTUALLY TO REMOVE IT FROM MULDER'S CONTROL. MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT AS A CONSEQUENCE, MULDER'S CHANCES FOR SUCCESSION TO THE LEADERSHIP HAVE BEEN SERIOUSLY HURT.

13. THE SUCCESSION STRUGGLE COLORED THE SESSION AS THE LEADING CONTENDERS JOCKIED FOR POSITION AND TRIED TO LINE UP OR MAINTAIN SUPPORT IN THE CAUCUS. THIS WAS EVIDENT THROUGHOUT THE SESSION AS LEADING MINISTERS CLOSELY TOED THE PARTY LINE AND AVOIDED VERLIGTE

(ENLIGHTENED) NOISES WHICH MIGHT HAVE ALIENATED THE LARGELY
CONSERVATIVE CAUCUS.

14. ALTHOUGH THERE WERE MORE VERLIGTE'S WITHIN THE
135-MAN CAUCUS THAN EVER BEFORE (ESTIMATES
VARY FROM 20 TO 40 DEPENDING ON THE DEFINITION
OF THE TERM) THEY MADE NO VISIBLE IMPACT. JAN MARAIS
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FOR EXAMPLE, DELIVERED NO SIGNIFICANT SPEECH DURING THE
SESSION. THE VERLIGTES CLAIM, HOWEVER, THAT BEHIND THE
SCENES THEIR INFLUENCE IS GROWING AND THAT DISCUSSION
WITHIN THE CAUCUS IS MORE OPEN AND LESS DOMINATED BY THE
VERKRAMPTE THAN IN THE PAST.
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